

Notes after attending rehearsals of *The Street* (1975). Letter to Anthony Howell, 14th June 1975, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Reedy, Carlyle (1938-)

Reedy is an experimental poet and performance artist who moved to the UK from the U.S. in 1964 and was involved in an exhibition organised by Circles with Pat **Murphy**, Annabel **Nicholson**, Jane **Clark**, Susan **Hiller**.

See: **London Film Makers Co-op**, **Poetry**

Rehearsal

London Exhibition
 Everything, including the *Ting* & *Free Session* to be rehearsed at least twice
 Table piece to be rehearsed Ascham St 5 times.
 Bobo Janz to be employed to create *Barriers* at some point - *Free Session* or solos or *Ting* or even table piece.

Extract from the notebooks of Anthony Howell, *nd*, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

By *Five Concert Pieces and a Free Session* at the 1975 **London Exhibition**, The *Ting*: Theatre of Mistakes claimed "some of its projects are rehearsed for periods as long as a year."

Going was 'fully rehearsed' complete with mistakes.

Reindeer Werk (1972-80)

Performance art duo Thom Puckey and Dirk Larsen who performed at the **Art Room**; influenced Howard **Tong**. Puckey describes their work as "pure, non-theatre based performance art" (see www.thompuckey.com/index.php?/works/1973---1981-the-reindeer-werk-period for chronology and images)

Tong recalls a performance in which Genesis P.Orridge [see

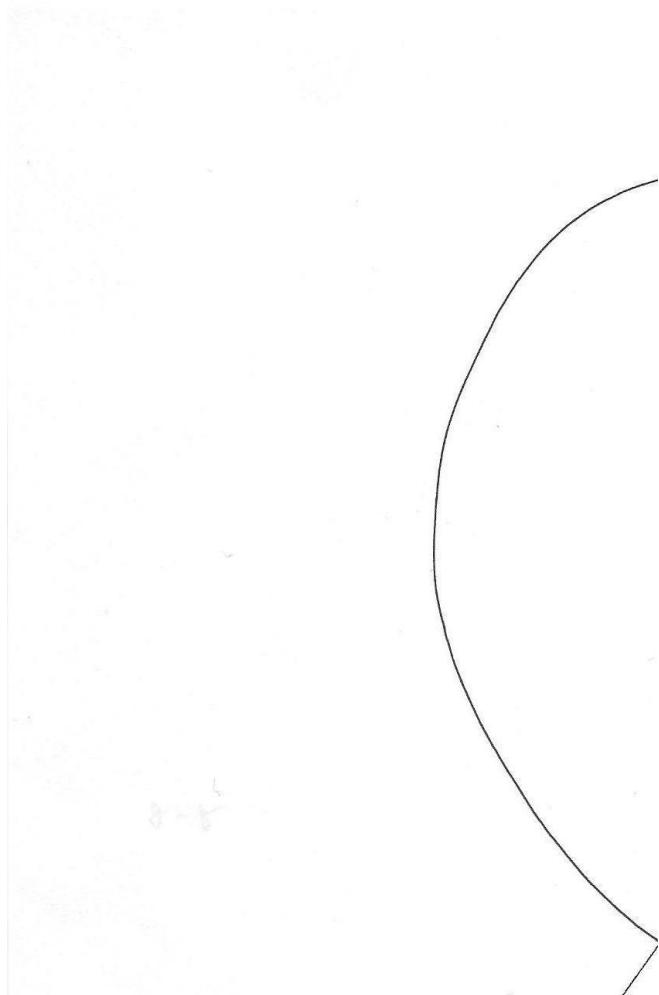
- Quarrels
- Question (Writer's)
- Questionnaire
- Quitting Bee
- Quotidian
- Rabbit
- Rain Dance
- Rape of the Mind
- Reedy, Carlyle
- Rehearsal
- Reindeer Werk
- Repetition
- Research
- Reversal
- Reviews
- Ritual
- Robert Janz
- Roles

U O I S U I O N



An A-Z of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes – Q & R

Marie-Anne Mancio



2009-09-03

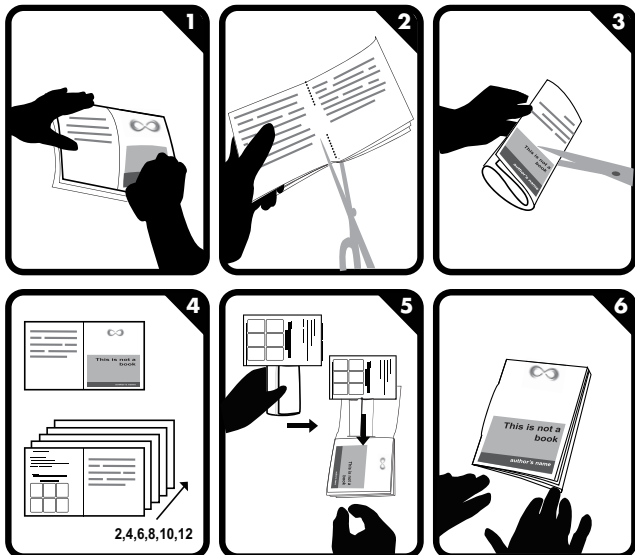
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Q-R

Marie-Anne Mancio

Although habit implies reading should begin at A, there is no more reason to start there than at XYZ. In fact, for the reader in possession of the entire set, a variety of reading patterns might be suggested. For example:
for those seeking a basic introduction to *The Theatre of Mistakes*:
Begin with a contextualising *Seventies*, followed by the *Introduction* for curator Jason E Bowman's essay; *Chronology*, *Core Group*, then move on to the performances: *Preparations* for

Why an A-Z?

All the interviewees have attested to the sometimes volatile nature of interactions within *The Theatre of Mistakes* that resulted in various periods of estrangement between members. Notwithstanding, the idea of opposition was incorporated into works.

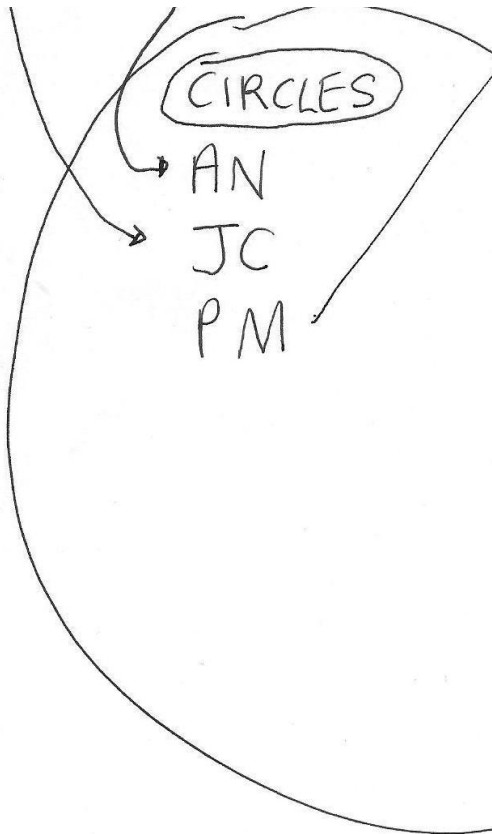
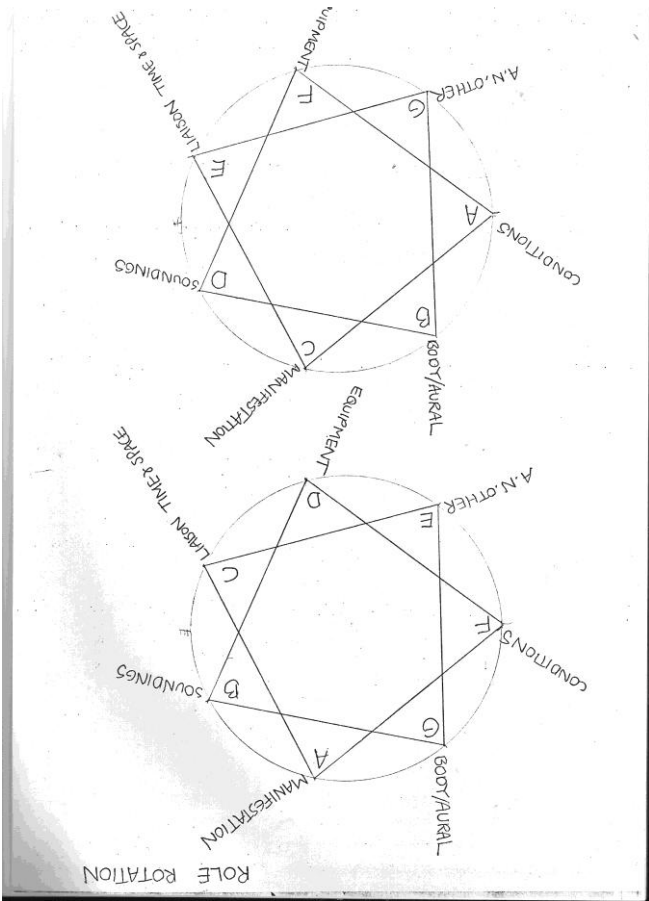
Notes from unpublished notebook of Anthony Howell, nd, c. 1974, *The Theatre of Mistakes Archive*

10 We need to be personally factful - come to some depth knowledge and presence of each other's heavier attitudes or feelings however quickly they may seem, however easily we may be able to criticise these quirks. Quarels also.

Quarels

The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

an A-Z



Displacement, *The Street*, *Homage to Pietro Longhi*, *Going*, *Rape of the Mind*, *Orpheus and Hermes*, and *Homage to Morandi*, for those interested in the relationship to dance: Ballet, Dance, Diagrams, Conceptualism, Seventies

Or one could begin with *Chance*, then throw 3 dice to dictate which book to read next (A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5, F=6, H=7, I-K=8, L=9, M=10, N-O=11, P=12, Q-R=13, S=14, T-U=15, V-Z=16) and 4 dice to determine the page number; and so on.

The decision to cross-reference across the 16 books often results in the replication of information: something reflected in The Theatre of Mistakes *Archive*. Before attempting to catalogue the latter, I consulted archivist Jan Booth (Archives and Records Manager, Kings College, London) who urged me to resist the academic propensity to order. I began instead to relish the fact the same diagram, for instance, appeared in several contexts (on the back of a program; as part of a funding application...) and to appreciate how my readings of it shifted accordingly. Suddenly links and overlaps become clearer, the depth of social and professional relationships revealed.

Contrary to perceptions of the A-Z as a closed set, the circuituous nature of this one means it is always open-ended, never complete. With its potentially irritating instruction to "See also:" each entry attempts to entice the reader to continue their search. Since further reading inevitably entails additional "See also"s (which may ask the reader to read on or even to return to their start point) it becomes apparent this is a narrative without conclusion. (See also: *Gossip*) This way of reading reflects the entangled nature of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes and the fact that some lacunae in the fabric can never be mended in the

absence of performer Michael *Greenall*. There is always at least one letter missing. The only entry under Y is you. Sometimes questions posed in one letter begin to be answered in another (see *Mistakes* and *Solution*). And some questions – some (see *Roles*) are little more than photo essays which require the viewer to draw their own conclusions.

Question (Curator's):

Jason E *Bowman* - "So how does the curator develop a methodology for decision-making with regard to an exhibition's content, particularly if the group has disbanded and the starting point is a collection of *ephemera*, *documentation*, and *artworks*?"

Questionnaire

How and when did you first hear of *Ting* and become involved with them?
 Who do you think of as integral to The Theatre of Mistakes and could you describe their main contribution?
 Group dynamics of *Ting* – who – if anyone – instigated what: what was the creative process; how were decisions taken; how did performances evolve?
 How would you describe the nature of your involvement?
 What do you see as the inception of *Ting*? Was it a session/conversation/performance?
 And the end?
 What was your background?
 What was your prime contribution to *Ting*?
 What do you think *Ting* contributed to your evolving practice?

Page from The Theatre of Mistakes Archive, nd, c. Summer 1975
delineating the various roles within the group, changeable and determined by chance

Roles - art 1	Accounting, Estimates (Cash), Contracts, Horses & Listings, Correspondence & Science
Soundings:	Documentation - Recorders, Photographers, Non-Rec. Pieces, Artworks
Conditions:	Production, Housekeeping, Medics, Cooking, Odd Jobs, Keeping us all happy
Equipment:	Tools, Ting things, costumes, shopping, hustle of same.
Boot/Bank:	Workouts, Performance, Rehearsal Workshops, Ting Exercises, Book
Time Space:	Planning, Relaxation, Deadlines, Meetings, Time Estimates, Place, Venue, Seeking Accommodation & going out for the group.
An. Other:	Rest, Romance, Personal Necessities, Recreation, Drinks & Drugs, Long & Short-Term Needs that are Personal.
Manifestations:	R.F. Friends, The Ting, Recent Job, The Show, Performance & Exhibition, Emergencies, Reviews, Ting in Transition



Purdies Farm, Hartley Wintney:
ROLE-SWAPPING GAME

Amikam **Toren** recalls *Quilting Bee* differently, saying he walked into a silent room and the women in there all looked up from their quilt making. "That's who she means by everyone," he says, drily. "All the women." And he felt himself unwelcome. (Conversations: London, November 2008)

Signe Howell remembers having to urge everyone to finish it but that she grew tired of it in the end. (Conversations: Oslo, 13th-14th October 2008)

"I did a few squares. I'm terrible with a needle." (Interview: Victoria **Chick**, London, 4th Nov 2008)

Notwithstanding the American bias of Lippard's analysis, she is correct to note the quilt has multiple centres of interest. Cf **Grids**

(32)
diversity within monotony of women's routines" betraying "uniformity and disjunction", "the culture"; a "quilt is a diary of touch" metaphor for women's lives, for women's 1970, the quilt has become the prime visual

"Since the new wave of feminist art began around 1970, the quilt has become the prime visual metaphor for women's lives, for women's culture"; a "quilt is a diary of touch" betraying "uniformity and disjunction", "the diversity within monotony of women's routines" (Knopf, 1983, 32-43) Lucy R. Lippard writes: (in *The Artist and the Quilt*. Ed. Charlotte Robinson. New York: Purdies farm. In "Up, Down, and Across: A New Frame for Quilts," Signe Lie **Howell** initiated this artwork at a weekend of events at

Quilting Bee (1974)

More generally, how do you remember the cultural landscape of the **Seventies**? What other artists influenced you/ were you in proximity with/ witnessed your work?

How would you contextualise Ting in relation to **conceptualism**/post-Minimalism/systemic art/performance? Were you conscious of belonging at any point?

How did economic considerations impact (on the aesthetic of the work/ on your decision to join/leave?)

Were you involved in the **documentation** process? If so, did you see it as relevant?

Purdies Farm – describe it. What do you associate with it?

Describe a typical day there. What performances do you remember seeing there? What was its function for you?

Role of **women** in the collective – in retrospect was there any differentiation?

To what extent did personal relationships inform the work?

Of the **Roles**, which did you enjoy?

Which works impacted on you particularly as a performer/observer?

How was Ting perceived by its audiences and who were they?

What levels and forms/models of participation could you identify?

The mistake: what do you perceive to be the function of the mistake?

What were the limitations or failures of Ting?

In retrospect, what was its legacy in art historical terms?

*The above questionnaire was devised by Jason E **Bowman** and Marie-Anne **Mancio** as a basis for questioning participants and observers of *The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes in conversations*. (2008-ongoing). However, interviewees were encouraged to reconfigure and digress. See: **Gossip**.*

Later works such as *Going* also draw on ritual (in this instance, the rituals of leave-taking), but by now the group's performance language is so formalised that any notion of the mystical or dreamlike that may have been present in events at Purdies has disappeared, to be replaced by structure as the over-riding concern.

When questioned in the 1980s by performance artist Linda Montano about her own relationship to ritual with respect to death, Fiona Templeton wrote:

"Ritual has been automatic and gave answers that seemed to have no questions, or I still asked. Automatic form distracts from what it holds but that's what it's for. Americans are jealous to create rituals, so think about them more, make symbolism a task until ritual only symbolizes the need for tradition"

(*Performance Artists Talking in the Eighties*, University of California, 2000, 453).

14 More domestic and interior games and ritual sessions

15 Hated of the word ritual, avoidance of referential or general art problems, not necessarily avoidance of narrative, but an expression of my being rather than an act of somebody else.

However, as notes from Anthony Howell's unpublished notebook reveal, this interest in ritual was not unanimous or uncritical:

Hillier's *Dream Mapping*. Anthony Howell compared listening to some systemic music (such as Reich's or Glass's) with primitive, ritualistic drumming for the sense of timelessness it induces. (See unpublished interview with Christopher Hobbs and John White, 1974, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive)

Further reading: 'Performance Art and Ritual: Bodies in Performance' Erika Fischer-Lichte *Theatre Research International* 22(1) 1997:22-37.

And for a more general consideration of ritual: *On Ritual* Performance Research, no.3, Winter 1998

Robert Janz, See **Janz, Robert**

Roles

ROLES—Autumn 1975

Longer term (approx three months max or minimum of 7 shows which are self-contained and larger shows in that period):

Manifestation... *Anthony Howell* ...

Soundings... *Mickay Greenall* ...

Liaison Time & Space... *Fiona Templeton* ...

Equipment... *Miranda Payne* ...

A.N. OTHER... *Miranda Payne* ...

Conditions... *Anthony Howell* ...

Body/aural... *Anthony Howell* ...

Longer term roles for the following period to be decided unanimously. No person should have the same role more than twice in succession.

Notes from The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Rabbit (random memory courtesy of Fiona Templeton) Anthony Howell dressed as a silver rabbit.

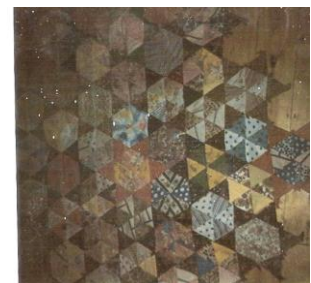
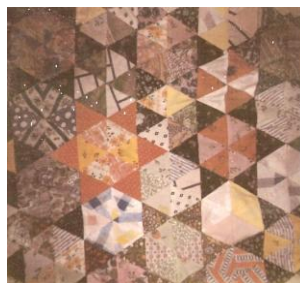
The quotidian is also apparent in *The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes*, use of movement which did not require trained dancers but drew instead on everyday movements; text – with the exception of *Orpheus and Hermes*; the 'costumes' and 'props';

Vermeer *The Maid Servant* c.1658



Anthony Howell has compared *Waterfall* to the paintings of Vermeer where the simplest gesture of a woman holding a pitcher of milk becomes transformed.

Quotidian



Quilting Bee Signe Lie [Howell] Photos: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



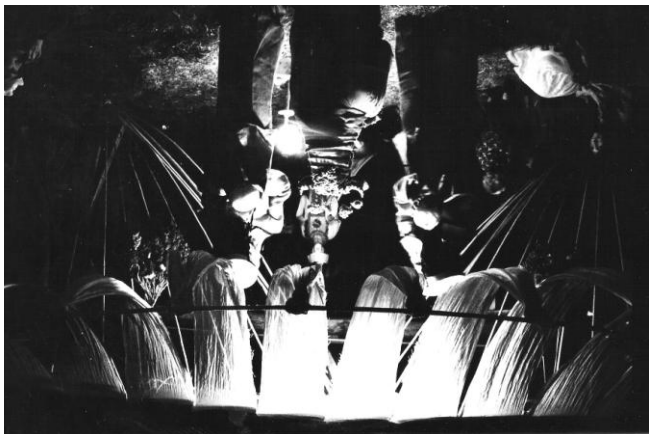
The quilt was not 'completed' – though perhaps completion was never the point - but has been perfectly preserved and is in the possession of Prof. Signe Lie Howell, Oslo. The above polaroids, dating to 1974, do not do its colour justice.

(Unpublished review labelled 'Janz', August 1974, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive)
 Victor Turner, who studied what was then Rhodesia's Ndembu tribe (1950-2; and again in 1953-4), defines ritual thus:

Show drifts in with flick. Quiet warm smiles. Gradual clearing of cluttered barn, arranging spaces and shadows. Mushroom forest are gathered. Albers, tapers, veils come into focus. Let's get more ferns. "Come - Let's get more ferns."

Expectation rises with the moon. Masks, moving sounds: flute, drumming, shimmering rhythms on hubcap cymbals, steel barrel drums. By taper, a coalescence of ritual, reverberations of Moh. The priest dances with horned disc. Long preparation for initiation and OH RUKK poured over with sacred glue. Fresh to eaten in form of mushroom putballs.

Performance at **Purdies Farm**, nd Photo @The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



See also: Susan **Hiller**, Signe Lie **Howell**, Anthony **McCall**
Ritual

"a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, [e.g. masks] performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests"

(V. Turner 'Symbols in African Ritual' in JLDolgin, DS Kemnitzer and DM Schneider (eds) *Symbolic Anthropology: A reader in the study of symbols and meanings*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, 183)

Turner alluded to the transformative power of rituals, wherein symbols (which comprised, for him, objects, activities, words, relationships, events, gestures, or spatial units) with a multiplicity of significances were manipulated in order to unite individuals within the social order or to fulfil psychological needs. Ritual then, as a form of social drama. Turner influenced Richard Schechner (see *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual* which Schechner edited along with Willa Appel, University of Cambridge, 1990), as did Allan Kaprow's *The Seven Qualities of Happenings* (1966). Schechner sees ritual as belonging with **theatre**, **play**, **games**, and sport. These activities are linked by – amongst other things - their attitude to time and their adherence to rules. He asserts:

"performing onstage, performing in special social situations (public ceremonies, for example), and performing in everyday life are a continuum"

(*Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Routledge 2002, 116).

cf Erving Goffmann *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1959.

The influence of ritual in performance art can be seen in Beuys' exploration of shamanism and his non-verbal actions; the exorcisms of Hermann Nitsch; Marina Abramovic's durational works, Ron Athey's mutilations, and so on. Evidence of an interest in ritual occurs in the early practice of The Theatre of Mistakes, particularly in activities around the **Ting** and **Purdies** farm (Susan

11
 Fiona **Templeton** and Mickey **Greenall** perform *Rape of the Mind*
 Nd @The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



Rape of the Mind (1978)
 The *Rape of the Mind: The Psychology of Thought Control, Menticide and Brainwashing* by Joat A. M. Meerloo, MD, (an instructor in psychiatry at Columbia University) was last published in 1956 and explored concepts such as techniques of individual and mass submission – forced confessions, brainwashing, advertising, propaganda, fear etc. It cites U.S. Marine Colonel Frank H. Schwable who was captured by Chinese Communists during the Korean War. Schwable confessed under duress to participating in biological warfare. He later repudiated this, claiming: "The words were mine but the thoughts were theirs."

Rain Dance

See **Active Circles**, **Englishness**

The News, September 1976

Bizarre dance brings rain —as forecast!

RAIN fell just 12 hours after the end of a bizarre "rain dance" on a village green.

Members of the Ting Theatre of Mistakes, a modern art company, carried out an eight-hour dance marathon at Hartley Wintney to bring rain.

Although a spokesman for the group said he was not too certain of success the next morning rain fell on the tinder dry countryside.

The company, which performs all over the country at festivals and art galleries, carried out the marathon dance as part of normal rehearsals.

Group spokesman Pete Stickland told the "News": "Some people may think we're odd. They don't understand it."

"We put together movements similar to those performed by Druids in the early times. Many people come to watch us."

Mr. Stickland said that last Thursday's rain dance was a

"one-off thing" in a bid to end the drought.

The group of four men and three girls aged between 24 and 30 live at a farm at Hazeley Heath.

SURPRISES

There, another member of the group said last Friday: "We're nicely surprised with the rain, but will have to wait and see just how long it lasts. We are all very pleased with our eight hours' work."

At the met office at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, a spokesman said: "Friday's rain was quite expected. It was on the cards and we had it in sight for a long time."

and Epilogue) where actions are reversed and speeded up.

Occurs in many exercises and works. See *Three Act Piece* (Act 2

Reversal

Research See: **Empirical**

(see *Bibliography*)

(*The Analysis of Performance Art: A Guide to its Theory and Practice*, xiii, repetition is associated with obsession."

cannot be created by a mixture of any other elements). In analysis

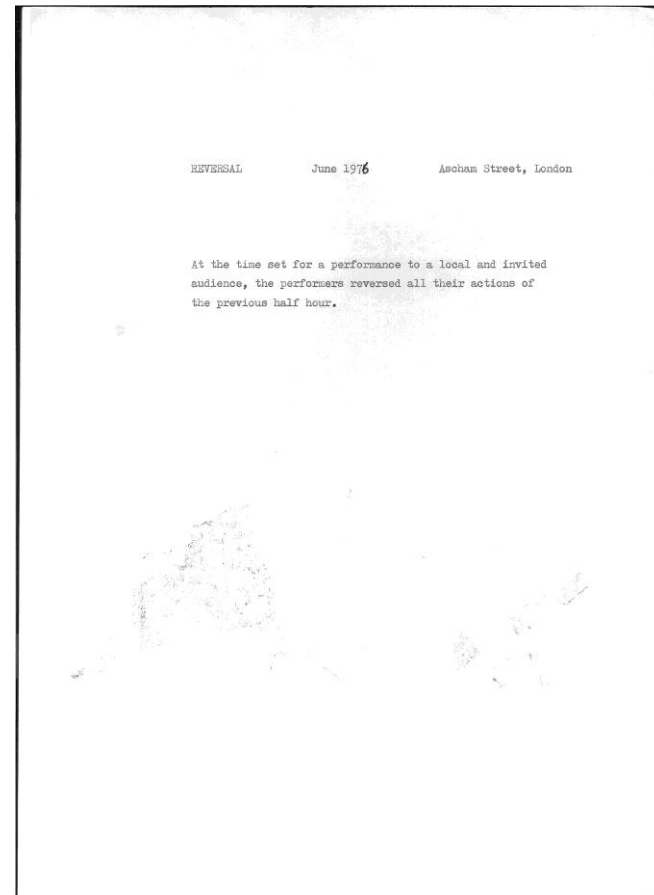
Described by Anthony Howell as "a primary element [in

Repetition

Poster for Reindeerwerk, nd

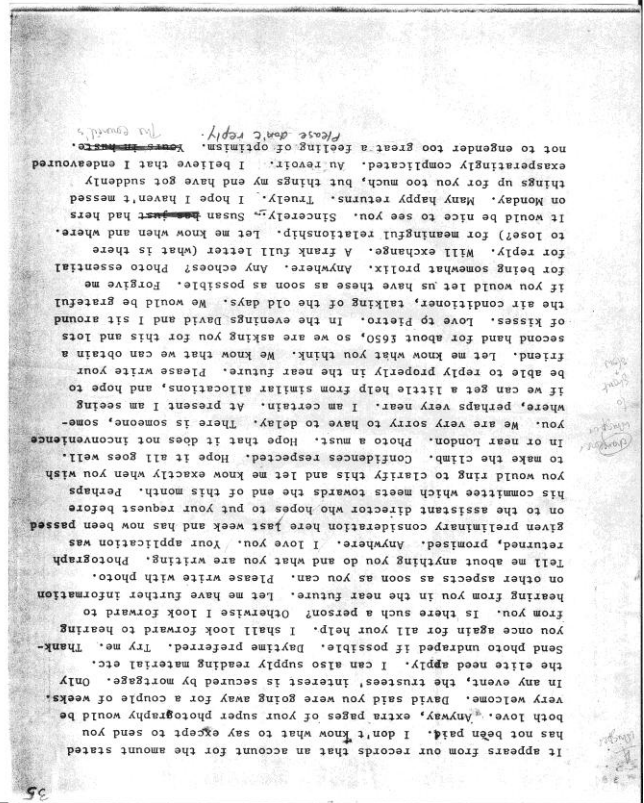


(Conversation: Howard Tong, London, October 2008) www.genesisp-orridge.com] wrapped himself in plastic and caught fire, only to be rescued by Reindeer Werk.

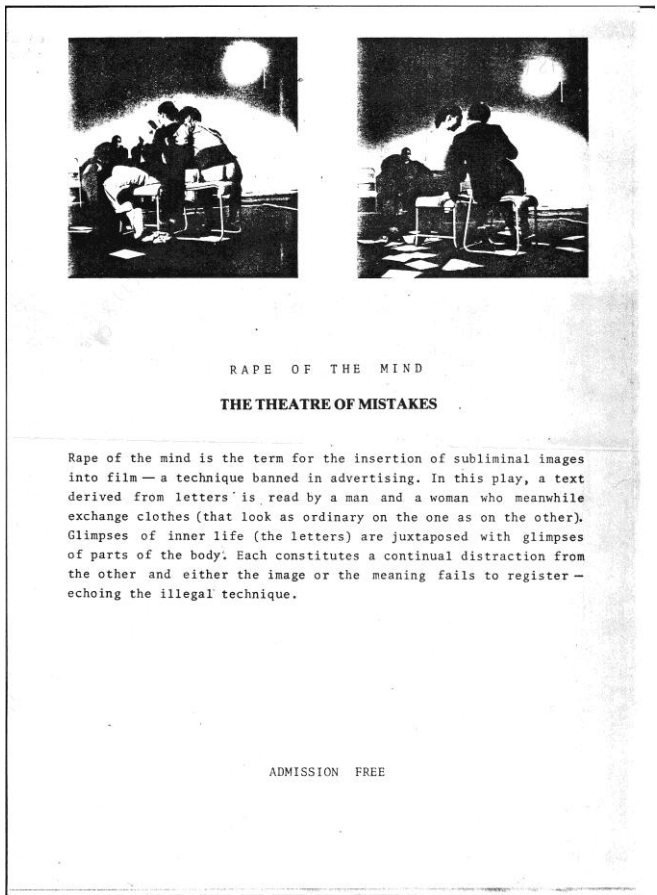


Reviews See **Critics**

Susan Hiller and David Coxhead. Annotated extract from script @The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive. It is probable that the 'Susan' and 'David' referred to are



The Theatre of Mistakes' Rape of the Mind deploys an **additive** and subtractive structure. A man and a woman seated at a table read from a letter, adding, removing, exchanging clothes.



Program, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

See also: **Letters**